DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 403 616 CS 509 414

AUTHOR Cyphert, Dale
TITLE Taking the Helm in Critical Pedagogy: The Basic Speech Curriculum as an Operationalization of the Paradigm.
PUB DATE Nov 96
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (82nd, San Diego, CA, November 23-26, 1996).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Techniques; *Curriculum Development; Higher Education; Instructional Improvement; *Introductory Courses; Persuasive Discourse; *Rhetoric; *Rhetorical Theory; *Speech Communication
IDENTIFIERS *Critical Pedagogy; Rhetorical Form

ABSTRACT

From Henry Giroux's perspective in his book "Border Crossings," all education ought to address some of the most difficult issues of contemporary rhetorical theory. Thus, the basic course in rhetoric is in a unique position to take the helm in critical pedagogy. The cutting edge of rhetorical theory responds to, contests, and incorporates emerging philosophies of postmodernism, critical studies, radical theory, feminism, and comparative epistemology. As philosophers, theorists, and researchers, educators recognize that rhetorical competence involves a complex interaction of culture, knowledge, power, and voice. Meanwhile, the basic communication course has traditionally relied on a pedagogical model that incorporates the assumptions, values, and methods of Western culture and philosophy. A critical pedagogist might design a basic course which would: (1) address rhetorical theory, rather than teach persuasive skill; (2) teach students to make rhetorical choices, not to use a set of rhetorical tools; (3) teach canonicity, not the canon; (4) teach civic responsibility rather than individual communication proficiency; (5) teach rhetorics, not rhetoric; and (6) teach popular culture, not speech making. (Contains 21 references.) (Author/CR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 403 616

Taking the Helm in Critical Pedagogy:

The Basic Speech Curriculum as an Operationalization of the Paradigm

Dale Cyphert
Pennsylvania State University

Top Three Competitive Papers
The Basic Course Commission
Speech Communication Association

San Diego
November, 1996

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
D. Cyphert
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Dale Cyphert
dxc20@psu.edu
234 Sparks Building
Department of Speech Communication
The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, PA 16802
(814) 862-8325

CS509414

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Taking the Helm in Critical Pedagogy:
The Basic Speech Curriculum as an Operationalization of the Paradigm

ABSTRACT

This paper considers the implications of critical pedagogy, defined by Henry Giroux as a broad rhetorical education, for the basic course in speech. From Giroux's perspective, all education ought to address some of the most difficult issues of contemporary rhetorical theory. Thus, the basic course in rhetoric is in a unique position to take the helm in critical pedagogy. The cutting edge of rhetorical theory responds to, contests, and incorporates emerging philosophies of postmodernism, critical studies, radical theory, feminism, and comparative epistemology. As philosophers, theorists, and researchers, we recognize that rhetorical competence involves a complex interaction of culture, knowledge, power, and voice. Meanwhile, the basic communication course has traditionally relied on a pedagogical model that incorporates the assumptions, values, and methods of Western culture and philosophy. This paper describes a basic course that would operationalize Giroux's alternative vision.

In *Border Crossings*, one of his many influential volumes in critical pedagogy, Henry Giroux introduces what he claims is a significant shift in his politics and theoretical work. Turning from a concern with institutionalized schooling and teacher education, Giroux proposes that pedagogy is a form of cultural production, "a configuration of textual, verbal, and visual practices that seek to engage the processes through which people understand themselves and the ways in which they engage others and their environment"(3). Of course, for those in rhetorical studies, there is little news in discovering that communication within the classroom is rhetorical. Nor is there any surprise in Giroux's claim that communication outside the classroom serves to educate citizens in the ways of a culture.

The communication field's response to Giroux's work has, in fact, been an embrace of what appears to be his support for education in oral and media communication, and for research that focuses on the development of student voice in the classroom. Mary Strine and Dwight Conquergood cite Giroux's volume to support claims that communication can be used to achieve a more inclusive and critical education. Sally Perkins and Jo Sprague likewise use the framework of critical pedagogy to explore the interactive, empowered, and power-wielding role of teachers. Greg Waddoups' recent review recommends *Border Crossings* for its "language of critique and possibility transcending the essentialism of many previous versions of identity politics where difference is romanticized or celebrated" (184) and suggests that Giroux provides theoretical tools for those who would extend democracy through critieal educational practices.

What seems to be largely missing from the discussion thus far has been a recognition that the claims of critical pedagogy do more than merely support the importance of communication in the classroom. Nor is Giroux simply repositioning education within the disciplinary boundaries of rhetorical theory and cultural criticism. Instead, *Border Crossings* lays out the parameters of an

educational philosophy that is explicitly rhetorical. Giroux asks his readers to recognize that rhetorical processes shape the perceptions, relationships, and actions of individuals within a culture, as well as to educate students in the specifics of how that process works.

Giroux never uses the term rhetoric. Within his discipline (he holds the Waterbury Chair in Secondary Education at Pennsylvania State University and teaches in the department of Curriculum and Instruction), rhetoric is a term commonly used in its culture-specific sense for the practices of public address and expository writing that rhetoricians might refer to "composition skills." Instead, he proposes a "new" subject called "the persuasive" that teaches how "cultural forms articulate processes through which the production, organization, and regulation of consent takes place around various social practices and struggles at the level of everyday life" (192).

Giroux defines a critical pedagogy as one that would include explicit instruction in "the persuasive". He advocates an activist stance in which teachers explain and demonstrate how individuals and social human behavior have the effect of influencing others, taking up "questions of power, domination, human suffering, and the possibilities of human struggle" (33). While Giroux admits and advocates his own radical "mission of making society more democratic" (10), he is adamant that it is not enough simply to develop a liberal, just, and inclusive curriculum. Although that could be done from any well-meaning ideological perspective, such a curriculum would ignore the more important task of teaching students to recognize the *process* by which social relationships are formed and maintained. The issue, he says, "is not one of merely creating a more enlightened or scientific canon but of raising more fundamental questions about how canons are used, what interests they legitimate, what relations they have to the dominant society, and how students are constituted within their prevailing discourses and social relations" (96).

It is clear that critical pedagogy, as defined by Henry Giroux, is a program of rhetorical education. Whatever else the curriculum might include, critical education is incomplete if the student has not been taught how a culture establishes, maintains, and enforces its own norms and how individuals negotiate their role in the process of cultural production. From this critical perspective, no individual can be considered well enough educated to participate in a democratic society without the tools to identify, question, and oppose, if necessary, the influence of culture and its institutions. Every student must be allowed and encouraged to find a voice with which to participate successfully in the rhetorical exchange.

It would seem reasonable that the course in basic communication is a likely candidate to take the helm in critical pedagogy. The means and methods of "cultural production" are the subject of rhetorical criticism and can be explained with the vocabulary of rhetorical theory. Rhetorical pedagogy boasts a long history of teaching individuals to find and use their own voice, to question and reform the norms of public discourse, and to participate ethically in civilized community. In fact, it appears that the speech community is generally favorable to the goals of critical pedagogy. The literature in communication education already reflects the influence of the philosophical position. Questions of power, student empowerment, voice, and the impact of media communication are all issues that currently inform research in the discipline. Some adopt an even more activist position, and cite the arguments of critical pedagogy to justify additional instruction in communication at all levels of the educational system.

If critical pedagogy *is* rhetorical education, though, another set of issues seems to warrant attention. The speech department, after all, offers one of the only two courses most students ever take in the specific elements of rhetorical competence. With the completion of basic public speaking and freshman composition, most universities expect students to have developed

competence in using the rules and tools of the culture's rhetoric. The claims of critical pedagogy would seem to call into question the ways in which universities are presently doing this work of rhetorical education. How does the current curriculum of public speaking compare with education in "the persuasive" that Giroux sets at the center of critical pedagogy? Furthermore, if the field of communication does embrace the principles of critical pedagogy as firmly as the journal articles demonstrate, what kind of a leadership role would be appropriate? What opportunities do speech educators have to take the helm in critical pedagogy?

Operationalizing the Paradigm

A common enough complaint about critical pedagogy, and Henry Giroux's work in particular, is that it "remains at the level of the abstract and theoretical while not providing a specific program of action" (Waddoups, 184). It is one thing to offer well-intended platitudes about critical pedagogy and quite another to discuss how such a thing could be made real. The same complaint could be made, of course, of the field of communication's willingness to tackle the difficult theoretical issues of postmodernism, feminist theory, cultural criticism, and epistemology in scholarly articles without ever operationalizing the implications in speech pedagogy. The latest journals tackle the nuances of postmodern discourse and the public sphere, but new editions of the basic texts do not reflect these same concerns. Aside from the addition of a specific chapter on ethics and updated examples, there is virtually no difference between the oldest (Oliver, Dickey, & Zelko) and newest (Lucas) speech texts on my shelf.

Rhetorical criticism engages contemporary discourse on its own terms, but universities continue to teach, to greater or lesser degrees, the organizational, presentational, evidentiary, and persuasive competencies that form the core of Modern Western rhetoric. Individual instructors might vary in the degree to which they are explicit about rhetorical ethics, cognizant of private,

mediated, or organizational communication sites, and sensitive to cultural variations in language and nonverbal communication styles, but discussions about the social construction of rhetorical competence are typically left for upper division and graduate courses. Graduate seminars consider the philosophy of rhetoric, but undergraduates and non-majors study only the rhetorical principles of public address that have served to empower Western culture. The discipline studies and critiques the rhetorics of women, minorities and popular culture, but the basic course teaches the argument, form, and style that are acceptable to the literate elite of Europe and America. Researchers investigate the ways in which human beings influence each other and concern themselves with the ethical questions of how and when individuals ought to do so. Rhetorical theorists have known since the time of the Sophists that rhetorical ability allows humanity to create a civilized community--or to create deception and oppression. Giroux is merely suggesting that it is appropriate to teach young people the wisdom that has been gained from three millennia of study. If the discipline choses not to accept that responsibility, it will not be for a lack of familiarity with the philosophical cutting edge. We are constrained only by an unwillingness to operationalize the philosophical paradigm.

A Curriculum

I will not, at this juncture, offer a complete argument for teaching rhetorical theory in the basic speech course. There are, after all, some real reasons not to. Many employers, graduate schools, parents, and even students would argue, sometimes convincingly, that simply learning to participate in the dominant culture--to follow the academic and corporate rules of rhetorical competence--is more necessary than understanding the rhetorical construction that is cultural production. The literature of critical pedagogy argues the opposite. It is difficult, however, to engage this debate on a purely abstract and theoretical level. All positions in the discussion would

be clearer if they addressed a concrete proposal--a visualization of the sort of course a critical pedagogist might design. Recognizing that this is merely one set of possibilities, gleaned from a single interpretation of the literature, consider the following operationalizations:

1. The basic course would address rhetorical theory, rather than teach persuasive skill.

If, as Giroux says, "critical pedagogy . . . rejects the reduction of teaching to a narrowly defined concern with instrumental techniques, skills, and objectives"(98) in favor of illustrating how people "come to know in a particular way within the constraints of specific cultural and social forms"(98), then he is arguing for rhetorical theory as a prerequisite to any instruction in rhetorical skill. To teachers who must occasionally question the moral position of teaching persuasive techniques to students who lack any sense of rhetorical ethics, this might appear to be a sane move. Surely, it is better to educate responsible members of society than to teach callow youths the finer points of demagoguery. In any case, the philosophy of liberal education is based on the notion that the university is a place where young people become thoughtful, critical thinkers. This is a familiar stance, and Jack Samosky reflects the opinion of many in academia who "resist the notion" that preparation for the job market might become "the primary reason for the existence of any University" (3). From this perspective, the basic skills course is already a skeleton in the discipline's academic closet: a high volume service course with an FTE that supports salaries, research, and assistantships, but that also exhibits an embarrassing level of utilitarian skill instruction. It is tempting to think that replacing it with a mandatory theory course could assuage the academic guilt complex without jeopardizing the pedagogical income base.

Critical pedagogy is not, however, a justification for simply turning the basic performance course into a basic theory course. Giroux's point is that democratic participation requires an understanding of how discourse is used to create and maintain political power. His complaint is

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

not that we teach persuasive skills *instead* of persuasive theory; rather, it is that we teach the circumscribed, acceptable persuasive tactics of polite society instead of the persuasive strategies used by society to make its members polite.

Suppose that in place of instruction and practice in the efficacy of certain persuasive techniques, the basic course addressed the ways in which an audience learns how to be persuaded. Clearly, the basic course presents and enforces norms of public discourse. When a lecture sets the ground rules for speech requirements, it simultaneously establishes norms for audience judgment. Critical pedagogy would require that students be made aware of that dynamic, and receive explicit instruction and practice in the evaluation not just of persuasion, but also of persuasive *standards*. Students might be required not merely to follow an "acceptable" persuasive format, but, in addition, to explain or justify for the audience the persuasiveness of their choice of format. Both speaker and audience would learn to be cognizant that the speech not only presents a text, but simultaneously teaches the audience how to read and evaluate that text.

Of course, this would require that instructors confront the social construction of epistemology and persuasive criteria. How does a requirement to cite three *published* sources support the hegemony of the literate elite? How does the caution that "analogy . . . should never be used to prove a point" (Nelson & Pearson, 159) preclude the relational thought of Asian philosophies? What does the privileging of objective argument imply about the highly contextualized rhetoric of an oral or feminine style? How must a student frame a personal narrative so that it can be perceived persuasively in an academic setting? If undergraduates are to receive an education that prepares them for discourse in a diverse world, a critical pedagogy would not leave these questions for the graduate seminars--seminars that seldom address pragmatic issues of discourse production anyway.

2. The basic course would teach students to make rhetorical choices, not to use a set of rhetorical tools.

A fundamental concern of critical pedagogy is that students consider how and why they influence, and are influenced by, others. Real learning always begins where students are, and the rhetorical location of students must be seen in relation to their enrollment in the basic course. In the context of many large universities, students function somewhere between depersonalized FTE units and oppressed victims of administrative politicking. At other institutions, students are consumers of job-related training or are becoming socialized into an elitist intellectual cynicism. Regardless of the specifics, Giroux points out that students can never understand the "university as a terrain of contestation" or the "nature of the struggle itself" without being able to ask "what the purpose of the university actually is or might be" (90). Whether students ultimately decide that the answer is a liberal education or preparation for obtaining a job, the basic course in rhetoric can be the place where they learn how individuals make strategic rhetorical choices and how organizations maintain themselves rhetorically.

Further, Giroux argues that the education students receive should provide them with a narrative of their own envisioned future that is "capable of providing them with a sense of history, civic courage, and democratic community" (91). Students would not merely master the use of a set of tools, but rather would have experienced them in a context such that they can learn to "see themselves" as participants in the institutional decision-making process. Thus, it is not for the omniscient and omnipotent instructor of rhetoric to decide *for* students either that they need to learn to use the tools to survive in this rhetorical culture, or that they need to develop their own authentic voices, or even that they must cast off the oppressive yoke of institutional codes. It would be the role of an instructor who is taking the helm of critical pedagogy to teach that

discourse *is* an instrument of influence, that individuals must locate themselves within the discourses they hear, and that students can develop techniques to engage others in that discourse.

One ramification of this perspective might be a rejection of the artificial and often problematic topic selection process. In the interests of relevance and motivation, most students are allowed to select their "own" speech topics and are often provided with instruction in techniques of doing so, as though it were a significant rhetorical skill. Meanwhile, even the texts admit that "for speeches outside the classroom . . . usually the speech topic is determined by the occasion, the audience, and the speaker's qualifications" (Lucas, 68). In other words, outside the classroom, discourse is instrumental in the ongoing dynamic of rhetoric exigence. "Speeches" do not exist in a rhetorical vacuum and cannot be considered rhetorically without considering the demands of the audience, situation, and culture. In a basic course in rhetoric, students could learn and practice discourse as a means of challenging the institution of the university. They could examine and practice their own options for critical debate in the academic environment. Surely, there are a multitude of topics of serious concern to students--careers, politics, social pressures--that they could, and according to Giroux, *should* learn to deal with rhetorically.

The difficulty, of course, is that the students do not know how to address these difficult issues. They do not know how discourse rules prevent them from resolving issues with the university. They have not learned how to decide where to begin or how far to take an argument in public discourse. They need to develop a sense of their own rightful place in the ongoing discourse of their peers, of the public sphere, and of the institutions that surround them. An instructor of rhetoric as critical pedagogy would have to tackle these difficult issues, a task quite different from allowing students to practice organizational and delivery skills in trivial exercises for a student audience that has no rhetorical stake in the discourse.

3. The basic course would teach canonicity, not the canon.

There has already been a great deal of discussion in the field of speech communication about the proper place of the Dead White Male Orator, that focuses, in general, on who ought to be "out" and who ought to be "in" instead. Giroux argues that "the debate over the canon must be refigured in order to address issues of struggle in which power and knowledge intersect to produce and legitimate specific orders of representations, values, and identities"(96). His critical pedagogy would not use Burke, or Lincoln, or even Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as exemplars. It would instead demonstrate the *process* by which a culture accepts and eventually exemplifies a particular kind of discourse. At the very least, then, the basic course would address how and why King is held up to be an excellent example, but Bob Dole is not.

Once the course begins to discuss canonicity, there might be grounds for students either to develop the skills that meet the parameters of excellence within Western culture or to define and meet another set of rhetorical standards. Instructors who already struggle with the issues of communication diversity will acknowledge that linear organization, direct statements of ideas, logical proof, and assertive demeanor are all elements of a masculine, Eurocentric model of public discourse. Nevertheless, an "enlightened" decision to allow or encourage a student to develop an alternative voice in narrative, associational logic, or personal autobiography leads both to assessment difficulties and to a very real concern that minority and female students can be thus left defenseless in a public sphere dominated by First World discourse.

There is no question that assessment will become an issue in the pedagogy of canonicity. Both culturally limited instructor expertise and university curriculum requirements highlight the *positive* aspects of developing a canon: a set of exemplars allows a culture to teach a consistent set of rules about what constitutes appropriate and effective discourse. Pedagogical assessment is

only possible when a community *has* agreed on norms and standards for the behavior to be assessed. The point of critical pedagogy is not to construct a politically correct, multicultural speech curriculum. Nor is it to hold student to some new, politically correct norms of discourse. The aim is to teach the *process* by which any community decides how to standardize, judge, and enforce its own discourse.

Some students, anticipating future career exigencies or coping with the effects of a bicultural education, might desire an opportunity to learn and practice a non-dominant rhetorical style. Such a classroom situation can highlight the boundaries of the canon. The discussion surrounding the differences, the assessment process, and the training required to be a "good" audience for such an exercise can provide an opportunity for students to understand and appreciate the process by which every culture and subculture creates a public sphere. Surely, this is more difficult than asking all students to jump through the ready-made hoops of the public speaking model. Playing the role of educational innovator might seem like a prestigious and rewarding step, but it is not the easiest job to do.

4. The basic course would teach civic responsibility rather than individual communication proficiency.

In its best moments, rhetorical pedagogy has been intimately related to the workings of the *polis* and the construction of ethical community. In contrast, American public education is unquestionably squeamish about any hint of morality in the curriculum. The typical "service" aspect of most speech education programs allows the disingenuous excuse that ethical instruction is to be addressed at all, it better framed as "career expectations" in the student's "major" department. The result is concentration on method, with little attention to the social context--the ethical role of speech within a community of speaking beings. Yet, in nearly any section of public

speaking, ethical questions arise: Are there some topics that are too sensitive, too controversial, or too trivial for in-class presentations? What is the appropriate response to a speech that crosses the line of good taste? Where is that line of good taste? What is the university's responsibility to protect a student's freedom of speech in a classroom situation? What is its responsibility to protect another student's right not to listen when attendance in the course is mandatory? How does a responsible audience respond to racist or sexist language? to insensitive humor or indiscreet language? to handicaps, nervousness, or foreign accents that make communication difficult?

Giroux does not advocate any particular set of ethical standards but would ask speech educators to turn their attention to rhetoric as the process people use to build community. Speeches do not happen except as part of the process by which humans being try to reach agreement on social, political, and ethical questions. In a critical pedagogy, Giroux says, any standard of ethics "moves beyond moral outrage, attempting instead to provide a critical account of how individuals are constituted as human agents within different moral and ethical discourse and experiences" (102). Within this model, it would be difficult for an instructor simply to set the rules for ethical classroom behavior. Even a lecture on rhetorical ethics does no more than present the ground rules for "moral outrage."

The very act of allowing each other a mutual opportunity to influence causes each class of public speaking to constitute itself as an audience and as a community. As a community, then, it also sets its own standards of discourse. The performance of students will rise, or fall, to the standard of individual mastery that the group builds for itself. Sometimes it seems that these student standards run counter to the dominant paradigm of speech construction. Disorganized students gain peer approval for humor or enthusiasm. Personal narratives are accepted without question, and the class audience fails to support any teacher mandated requirement for objective

proof. Trivial or offensive speeches are applauded for their creativity or uniqueness. These are common enough situations, and in a traditional skills course, they become issues of speech criteria and individual performance as measured against some paradigm of speech ethics. Not only are speakers instructed, but audience members are taught as well to critique their peers' speeches according to the standards of Western rhetoric.

A critical pedagogy might instead use the classroom as a microcosm of community, and treat rhetorical competence as a complex interaction of ethics, social norms, discourse rules, and individual voice. It seems unlikely that standard critique sheets would have much place in such an environment. Peer evaluations might look like responsive essays. Even the model of the public "speech"--the unitary voice holding sway over a submissive audience--might be open to question. A community can give voice to its members in a host of different ways, and each individual must develop and gain proficiency in his or her own unique voice. The results might be as variable as cultures themselves, and the real content of such a course would not be the development of individual proficiency, but the development of the negotiation skills with which individual voices create a public sphere.

5. The basic course would teach rhetorics, not rhetoric.

Giroux, like most postmodern thinkers, values a multiplicity of voices, and argues that "we must take seriously, as an aspect of learning, the knowledge and experiences that constitute the individual and collective voices by which students identify and give meaning to themselves and others by first using what they know about their own lives"(104). He recognizes however, that the value is not in simply allowing all voices to be heard, but rests in developing the "referent for developing a public language" (105) that provides all students with the rhetorical tools they need to engage in "critical democracy and responsible citizenship" (105).

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Giroux is not making a politically correct call for "multiculturalism" and "diversity," nor would his conception of a basic course in rhetoric be one that uncritically showcases examples of black or female or gay speakers. Nor would it simply provide a sterile space for students to voice their personal concerns. The course in rhetoric would address, instead, the ways a community can, does, and does not create a public sphere in which different voices can be heard. Bell hooks describes the authentic listening that occurs when an audience can "learn about my life, they also learn about the mistakes I make, the contradictions. They come to know my limitations as well as my strengths . . . Sharing the contradictions of our lives, we help each other learn how to grapple with the contradictions as part of the process of becoming a critical thinker" (56). In her view, voice is not about allowing a person to put on the public demeanor of Speaker; it is about finding a way to hear the honest expression of a person's confusions, doubts and anxieties.

From this perspective, the course that teaches students to present themselves credibly, to develop a public ethos, and to tailor their words to the situation and audience is a course that silences *every* voice. The rhetorical model that is the basis for much contemporary speech instruction is one that calls on individuals to communicate publicly only their most well-formed ideas, to display those ideas to greatest advantage, and to do these things with a purposeful plan to gain the assent of others. It is a model that relegates unformed ideas, paradoxical beliefs, and the quest for consensus to the netherworld of "private discourse." It might be that there is not yet an alternative model to offer our undergraduate students, but they could be invited to join the search, and to explore the ways in which authentic concerns can be discussed in a public environment.

6. The basic course would teach popular culture, not speech making.

Giroux claims that one of the ways in which teachers can function as "cultural workers" is to link the schools with "the reconstruction of public life" (154). He suggests cultural studies,

popular culture, the arts, and critical literacy as methods by which teachers can engage in a pedagogy of democratic possibility. Giroux claims that students cannot participate as political beings without an understanding of the ways in which discourse works and calls for an educational system that includes instruction in the "set of democratic practices that engages all citizens in common governance . . . these practices can never be inherited but must be learned and relearned by each successive generation"(149).

The use of popular examples, situations, and artifacts to instill enthusiasm in young students is a standard teaching tool, but a course that takes the helm in critical pedagogy might require a more radical departure. In the public sphere that surrounds contemporary students, speeches are often an unknown and irrelevant element. Speeches are what students channel surf *over* on Sunday afternoon television. Student politics are addressed on MTV. Their social and ethical norms are influenced by sit coms and talk shows. Their sense of justice is formed from Rodney King home videos, the O. J. Simpson trial, and *America's Most Wanted*. The instructor who teaches the art of public speaking on the grounds that it will *become* relevant once these students enter the world of work and community might be telling the truth, but will not be teaching a form of discourse that exists in their public sphere. In any case, the public discourse that is popular culture will not disappear when these students reach adulthood. Whether or not they will ultimately require the skills of traditional public address is a moot point for this hypothetical curriculum. Critical pedagogy would view the discourse of popular culture as more salient and, thus, a more appropriate text through which to discern the rhetorical rules of a community.

The teacher of public speaking, then, might look somewhat more like a teacher of media criticism, but that need not mean the course should abandon training in oral discourse. Many theorists have made the argument that the electronic media is ushering in an age of "secondary

orality" (see Gronbeck et al.). While the discourse might be unlike the public address we have been teaching since the early part of this century, oral communication forms appear to be gaining, rather than losing, importance. Students could be asked to frame their comments on abortion, gun control, or police abuse in the context of media coverage or popular film. They could interrogate the popular portrayals of youth, race, or gender. They could address directly the various forms of discourse that our culture uses to establish and enforce its norms, expectations, and values. Surely, these would be more engaging speech topics than "drinking games" or "how to be a couch potato,"* but more importantly to the mission of critical pedagogy, students would learn to frame their own discourse within the post-literate public sphere that is popular media.

Would such a course include three or four assignments to "give a speech" to the rest of the class? Perhaps not. Videotape assignments have been used in basic communication courses to place discourse in the context of mass media. Group discussion, symposium, and forum assignments have been used to force the negotiation of communal voice. Storytelling, debate, and metaphor can offer instruction in organizational strategies by illuminating their contrasting norms and rhetorical effect. Discussions of classroom rules, grading criteria, and speech ethics often tackle the issues that are highlighted in the literature of critical pedagogy. In short, most speech instructors have the tools readily at hand to engage in critical pedagogy. Nevertheless, there seems to be no question that a curriculum that takes seriously that educational philosophy would be substantially different from the "give four speeches" paradigm. It would instead teach students to question the assumptions that valorize any single discourse form.

Incorporating critical pedagogy into the speech curriculum is a project that could prove difficult, distasteful, politically dangerous, and even detrimental to the socialization process that

* two topic proposals at this university, Fall 1995.

presently prepares our students to perform as expected in the American workplace. Furthermore, this paper is not meant as a call to accept or reject the goals of critical pedagogy. The discussion of postmodern theory and critical studies in our field does warrant, however, some extension to the pragmatics of discourse production and rhetorical pedagogy. Giroux has made the argument that critical pedagogy amounts to a rhetorical education, a process that could be operationalized in the basic speech course. The claims of postmodernism have provided intriguing and enlightening discussions in the journals, they have offered support for the use of diverse oral performance in the classroom, and they have led to more caution about power, hierarchy, and metanarrative in the research. The claim of critical pedagogy asks one more thing: consider the role and implementation of speech pedagogy in a postmodern world.

Works Consulted

Braye, Steve. "Radical Teaching: An Introduction." *The Teaching Professor* (October 1995): 1-2.

Brow, Ellen. Rev. of *Border Crossings - Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education* by Henry A. Giroux. *College and Research Libraries* 54 (1993): 281-282.

Conquergood, Dwight. "Storied Worlds and the Work of Teaching." *Communication Education* 42 (1994): 337-348.

Cooks, Leda M. "Critical Pedagogy as Communication Education: Researching the Possibilities." Diss. Ohio University, 1993.

Einhorn, Lois J. "Rhetorical Foundations." Ed. Linda Costigan Lederman *Communication Pedagogy* Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing. 1992. pp. 259-280.

Giroux, Henry A. *Border Crossings: Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education*. New York: Routledge. 1992.

Gronbeck, Bruce E., Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup, Eds. *Media, Consciousness, and Culture*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications. 1991.

hooks, bell. *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End Press. 1992.

Lederman, Linda Costigan. "Approaches to teaching Undergraduate Course in the Classroom." Ed. Linda Costigan Lederman *Communication Pedagogy* Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing. 1992. pp. 19-28.

Lucas, Stephen E. *The Art of Public Speaking*. 5th Ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc. 1995.

Napier, L. A. Rev. of *Border Crossings - Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education* by Henry A. Giroux. *Educational Administration Quarterly* 29 (1993): 128-132.

Nelson, Paul and Judy Pearson. *Confidence in Public Speaking*. Annotated Instructor's Edition, 5th ed. Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown Communications, Inc. 1993.

Oliver, Robert T. Dallas C. Dickey and Harold P. Zelko. *Communicative Speech*. New York: Dryden Press, revised edition. 1955.

Perkins, Sally J. "Toward a Rhetorical/Dramatic Theory of Instructional Communication." *Communication Education* 43 (1994): 222-235.

Roemer, M. and V. Sharma. Rev. of *Border Crossings - Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education* by Henry A. Giroux. *Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 26 (1993): 82-85.

Samosky, Jack. "Samosky's Speculative Soliloquy." *Dialogue*. California State University at Hayward, Department of Speech Communication (Spring, 1995): 3.

Sprague, Jo. "Critical Perspectives on Teacher Empowerment." *Communication Education* 41 (1992): 181-203.

Sprague, Jo. "Expanding the Research Agenda for Instructional Communication: Raising Some Unasked Questions." *Communication Education* 41 (1992): 1-25.

Sprague, Jo. "Ontology, Politics, and Instructional Communication Research: Why We Can't Just 'Agree to Disagree' About Power." *Communication Education* 43 (1994): 273-290.

Strine, Mary S. "Of Boundaries, Borders, and Contact Zones: Author(iz)ing Pedagogical Practices." *Communication Education* 42 (1994): 367-376.

Waddoups, Greg L. Review of *Border Crossings* by Henry Giroux. *Communication Education* 44 (April 1995): 183-185.